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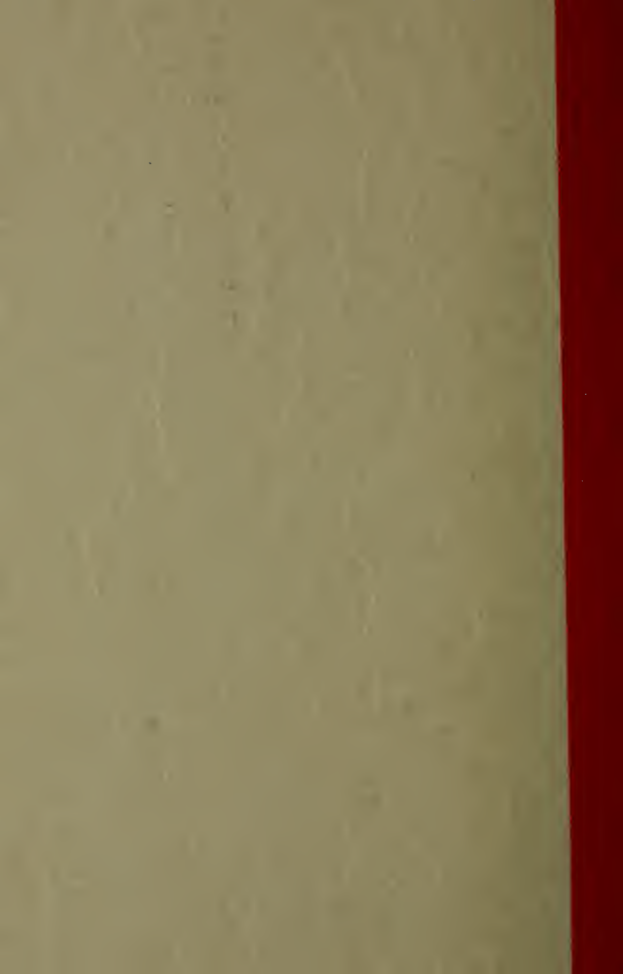
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Letters and Addresses on Woman Suffrage

By Catholic Ecclesiastics

COMPILED BY
Margaret Hayden Rorke



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FOREWORD

Prompted by the desire to correct the prevalent impression that the Catholic Church is officially opposed to Woman Suffrage, the compiler offers the following letters and addresses. As a Catholic mother, she submits these expressions of Catholic Ecclesiastics (with their permission) in the hope that they may serve, not only to remove misapprehension and prejudice, but to inspire every woman with the desire to claim a share in the direction of legislation which affects her own status and the welfare of her children.

M. H. R.

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CARDINAL'S RESIDENCE
408 N. Charles Street

BALTIMORE, March 27, 1914.

MY DEAR MRS. RORKE:

His Eminence, the Cardinal,* directs me to write and state that in answer to your letter regarding the Church's attitude concerning Woman Suffrage, the Church has taken no official attitude on the subject, but leaves the matter to the good judgment of her children, as to what they think best.

The statement that our Church is opposed to the enfranchisement of women is incorrect.

Faithfully yours,

EUGENE J. CONNELLY,

Assistant Secretary.

Mrs. William H. Rorke,
57 Strong Place,
Brooklyn, New York.

*His Eminence James Cardinal Gibbons.

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The following letter from the Most Rev. Patrick W. Riordan, Archbishop of San Francisco, was read in all the churches of the Archdiocese, Sunday, August 11, 1912:

REV. AND DEAR FATHER:

While our Catholic people, with the high ideals which the Church holds before them, ought to be models of right living and exemplars of the highest Christian virtue, they should also possess a high degree of civic virtue.

The enjoyment of the privileges and blessings of citizenship impose correlative duties and obligations which no citizen should ignore. Among these duties the chiefest is voting. Especially is this true in a country with our form of government, in which a vote has but an arithmetical value. Majorities rule, both in making the laws and in choosing our officials; hence, it is clear that the stability of our government depends ultimately upon the civic and moral virtues of its individual citizens.

Our Catholic people, therefore, should be not only law-abiding citizens, but should take part in the making of the laws under which they live, and in the election of officers worthy to administer the laws when made. This is true for women as well as for men.

In California, woman suffrage is now an accomplished fact. Women ought not, therefore, to permit their traditional love for the virtues of the home, their innate dignity and becoming reserve, to prevent them from discharging the chiefest of civic obligations. I wish, therefore, you would take a seasonable opportunity of advising our new electors to register, that they may be at all times prepared to give their services in making California a model State, and of handing down to the children that come after them, a tradition of righteousness and of unselfish patriotism.

Yours sincerely in Christ,

PATRICK W. RIORDAN,

Archbishop of San Francisco.

The following letter was issued by Rt. Rev. Paul P. Rhode, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, Ill., on hearing that many foreign women of the Archdiocese hesitated to register without the sanction of the Church. This letter was read in all the churches under his jurisdiction on Sunday, March 15, 1914.

“Catholic women of Illinois, in complete harmony with the teaching of the Church, should all accept the new prerogative of their citizenship with which they have been invested by the extension of suffrage to them by law.

“Conditions demand that they be not reluctant to exercise their right of voting, but on the contrary, that they take a lively interest in the political life of the country. Let them do this provided they do not forget their home, their duties toward their families, and provided that their interest in politics be at all times dignified, modest, and in agreement with the dictates of their conscience.

“Let them shun blind partisanship, beware of demagogues, and hold fast to the ideals of Christian motherhood, Christian maidenhood, and earnest citizenship.

“Let the Catholic women remember the debt of gratitude to society and to the State for the benefits which they and all enjoy under its protection. When entering the polling place or voting booth no other motives should actuate them than the welfare of the State, the good of society, and above all the protection of the family life of the nation and of sound principles.”

CHURCH OF THE SACRED HEART,
457 West 51st Street
NEW YORK, May 26, 1914.

DEAR MRS. RORKE:

I hope you will pardon my delay in answering your courteous note of the 26th ult.

You asked me if the copy of a clipping you enclosed was authentic. I answer, yes, substantially. There is, however, one correction to be made.

It was not the other day but about two years ago that I expressed myself, as quoted in the clipping, to a representative of the *Globe* of this city.

Yours sincerely,

JOSEPH F. MOONEY.

“The Church has never taken any stand on this matter of extending the franchise to women,” said Msgr. Mooney, Vicar-General of New York, the other day. “There is no reason whatever why any woman in the Church should not advocate votes for women, so long as she does it in an orderly lawful way. It does the Church a grave injustice to circulate the report that Catholic members in the different State legislatures are being influenced to vote against Suffrage because the Church is opposed to it.”

“Whatever has been said on this subject by priests and members of the hierarchy has been said by them as individuals.”

PAULIST FATHERS
660 California Street
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.,
April 16, 1914.

MY DEAR MRS. RORKE: Yours of the 10th arrived yesterday, and you see I am answering it without needless delay.

It is quite true that I am, and have been all along, in favor of woman suffrage; that is to say, as far as the right to vote is concerned; which is, of course, the strict and proper meaning of the word. As to being voted for, and holding public office, the principal objection to that, with regard to married women, especially with families, seems to be their necessary occupation with other duties. The same objection, of course, also applies to the clergy, to priests especially, and in fact to doctors and business men generally. But the man's business can usually be given up or delegated to some one else, whereas that can hardly be said of mothers of families.

When it comes, however, to voting for others for public office, or for measures submitted to popular vote, I regard the argument so commonly advanced about woman's "sphere" being the home as simply and obviously absurd. One might as well say that the doctor's sphere is his office or the hospital, or his patient's houses; or the priest's sphere the pulpit, the altar, or the confessional. The point is that no time need to be taken from one's regular duties in order to vote. I have never found that more than an hour, at the very outside, needed to be taken from my usual employments, in the whole course of the year, in order to register and vote. It seems to be absurdly assumed that women, if they vote, must plunge into a whirlwind of political meetings, parades, and the like. There is no reason why they should, any more than there is

why quiet and business-like men should do so. Men just inform themselves sufficiently to vote intelligently, and vote ; that is all that most sensible men do. Women may have to make some fuss in order to get the right to vote ; but when they have got it, as they have in this State, they make less fuss than men do. That is our experience here. They learn what is needed in order to vote correctly and avoid mistakes in marking their ballots better than men do.

As to what is really your main question, whether the Church is opposed to woman suffrage, the answer is simply that it is not. Probably the majority of our prelates and priests have been so ; but just as a matter of private opinion, due mainly to a conservative habit of mind, which Catholics, especially ecclesiastics, naturally get into. But no official action has been taken, and there is no probability whatever that any ever will be.

Of course, by her Divine constitution, the Church excludes women from any share in *her* government. But she excludes the male laity just as entirely. But with regard to the government of the State, she has nothing to say. During the greater part of her history, the government of the State has been monarchical ; but she never made any objection to queens regnant, any more than to kings. She has never opposed democracy as a form of government in the State. If, therefore, the people are to take the place of a monarch, why should she oppose the female people any more than the male ? It would not appear that she would object, if the people chose, to restrict the suffrage in a democracy to women exclusively, and give the men no vote at all. It would, probably, be good for the interests of religion to have such an arrangement. This may seem to be merely a joke, but it is not meant that way. How good it would be for France and Catholic countries generally, just now !

And it is quite plain that with regard to moral questions, the interests of morality would be advanced by woman suffrage, in the sense in which I have used it; that is of women voting, not of their being voted for, for public offices. They seem, in some cases, to have made a success at the latter; but, for married women, at any rate, common sense would probably, as a rule, deem it inadvisable, just as it would be to elect a priest as mayor of a city. He has his own business to attend to, and the two cannot be combined. The temporal power of the Pope has its special reasons, the main one being to secure his independence; but he never attended to the details of government.

Yours very truly,
GEO. M. SEARLE, C.S.P.

WHY I BELIEVE IN WOMAN SUFFRAGE

BY

REV. J. ELLIOT ROSS, Ph.D., C.S.P.

Chicago, Ill.

Author of "Consumers and Wage-Earners"

When I was living in an Italian seminary in Rome, I once startled the priests at the table out of their masculine self-complacency when I told them I thought that women were higher and nobler than men as a general thing and would make better priests. "How about St. Paul's legislation?" asked one. "Didn't he say that women shouldn't be heard in church?" "Certainly he did," I admitted, "but that was only local and temporary. It was probably dictated by the fact that St. Paul was such a confirmed bachelor."

"Then Christ made a mistake," objected another, "in selecting men to be His ministers." "Not at all," I answered, "because He chose the weak things of this world to confound the strong."

"But if women are stronger and nobler than men,"

said a third, "Christ should have become a woman." "No more," I said, "than He should have become an angel, because angels are nobler than men. Christ wished to empty Himself entirely, to humble Himself as much as possible."

With a shrug of the shoulders, they decided it was the American way of looking at the question and incomprehensible to a Latin.

I suppose the chivalrous devotion of American men to women is incomprehensible to a Latin, and I am afraid that you will never have the chance to show whether or not you would make better priests. You will never be able to actualize Gibson's picture called "In Days to Come Our Churches May Be Fuller," representing a crowded congregation of men listening to a beautiful woman discoursing from the pulpit. We Americans can't give our women the priesthood, but we can give and have given you the ballot. You have the chance to show there that you are better and nobler and more sweetly reasonable than men. You have the chance to show that you can vote honestly, fearlessly, intelligently.

Perhaps I am expected to give you the Catholic view of woman suffrage. If that be all that you wish to know of, you may as well stop reading now. That can be stated in less than a dozen words. For the Catholic view of this question, to put it in an Irish way, is that there is no Catholic view. You might just as well speak of the Catholic view of the tariff, or the weather, or the corn crop. There is no Catholic view of woman suffrage, because it is not a Catholic question.

As was recently said editorially in the official organ of the Archdiocese of Chicago, the Church "has never taken any stand either for or against the proposal. True, individual members of the Church, and even members of the clergy and hierarchy, have expressed opinions pro and con in regard to it, but these are but

individual opinions, and do not represent the attitude of the Church as a whole. There is no obligation placed upon Catholics by the Church binding them to oppose any more than to support the suffrage movement, simply because there is no intrinsic question of faith or morals involved in it." (*The New World*, Chicago, Ill., Oct. 18, 1913.)

Therefore, when I speak to you on woman suffrage, I am not giving you the Catholic view. I am giving you my own view. I am speaking to you as a citizen, not as a priest.

Personally, I am very much in favor of woman suffrage, and that for three reasons.

The first is, that women need the suffrage as much for their own highest spiritual and intellectual development, as for a protection against man-made laws.

The second reason is, that men need women as help-mates in political as well as in domestic life.

And my third reason for suffrage is, that there is no reason against it.

WOMEN NEED THE SUFFRAGE

In the first place, women need the suffrage. They need it for their own spiritual and intellectual growth. You have heard it said, doubtless, that the suffrage is going to hurt women spiritually. These objectors take the lofty ground of looking out for woman's best interests and profess to believe that she will be degraded by the foulness men have created in political life. But such persons underrate woman's influence for good. If we could conceive the home without a mother, family life would be worse than political life. And to extend woman's influence from the hearth to the machinery of government, is not going to injure her, but purify and ennoble our politics.

I believe that women, in order to fulfill their home duties, need to get out of the home in the wider life

of the nation. To center all our interests in one family is selfishness, no matter how big the family, and all selfishness is narrowing. As has been said, the history of civilization is the history of the enlarging concept of neighbor. At first confined to immediate blood relations, then to a village or tribe, then a nation, we are gradually growing into a realization of that sublime intuition of St. Paul, when there will be neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, white nor black, but one brotherhood of man united through the fatherhood of God.

Also, woman needs the vote to protect herself against man-made laws, whether or not she have property.

It is a trite saying, but its triteness does not rob it of its truth, that the unmarried woman who is paying taxes is being taxed without representation. And the fact that this has been going on so long does not make it less tyranny than what our fathers fought against. Women who are going to pay the tax should have some voice in fixing the rate; women who are going to pay the assessments should have some voice in deciding upon the improvements.

And the married woman's rights in her own property and in that of her husband should be just the same as those of her husband in his own and in hers. There is absolutely no reason for any distinction favoring the man, except that men have made the laws. Yet in some States, the property relations between husband and wife are a virtual realization of the old joke: What's yours is mine, and what's mine is my own. The wife has no control over her husband's property, real or personal. He may dispose of it without her consent and in any way. Whereas, the management of her estate is entirely in his hands. Her personal property becomes his property; her real estate is managed by him. He can eject tenants (even

his wife's own mother), collect rents and use the income in any way he pleases. He may give his wife a part but he is not bound to.*

Formerly in Maryland,† the surviving husband of an intestate woman took life estate in all the wife's realty. This arrangement might sometimes work extreme hardship to the children. For instance, a wealthy widow with one child, a daughter, remarries and dies without a will. The child, if her mother had only real property, becomes dependent upon the generosity of a step-father. She owns her mother's estate, but can get none of the income until her step-father's death.

In many States a man has a legal right to his own wages and they cannot be seized for any debt contracted by his wife without his consent. Yet his wife's wages can be seized for his debts, though she may have had absolutely nothing to do with making them and may have been seriously injured by such expenditure. A mistress was once about to pay her cook when she was handed a perfectly legal document requiring her instead to pay the money to a certain saloonkeeper, because the cook's husband had run a bill there. So this woman, besides taking the abuse and beating from her husband in his cups, actually had to pay by her hard work for the liquor that made a beast out of him.‡

*Sou. W. Rep., 63, p. 867, Rev. Stats. 1895, Art. 2967, Texas Sup. Ct., held during marriage husband has control of wife's separate estate. Tenn. Reps., 86-333: Husband may eject tenant of lease made by wife without his consent. As head of family he controls wife's lands. Id. 101, 374: Husband entitled on marriage to wife's personalty in possession and at her death to choses in action. Husband recovered land wife had willed to half brothers and sisters, she having no issue.

†Cf. Md. Code 1904, Art. 45, Sec. 7.

‡This happened in Illinois. Law has since been changed to protect their wages from creditors of husband. Cf. Ill. Rev. Stats. 1912, p. 1284, Sec. 7.

The property relations of man and wife should be recognized as an equal partnership, though even then, probably most women would not be getting what they really contribute. Anything made and saved after marriage should be shared half and half, and the wife should have the power of disposing of her portion by will. Comparatively few women are supported by their husbands. The economic contribution of the woman is usually fairly equal to that of the man, as is found out when the mother dies. His wages are seldom sufficient then to buy in the market the same services that his wife was giving gratis. Her contribution in cooking, sewing, washing, caring for the children, in forcing the income to go as far as possible, in making all that is meant by the word "home" is, in the vast majority of cases, worth more than the man's contribution of daily wages.

Again, in the question of rights over the children, there is a discrimination against the woman. In some States she may not recover damages for the death of a son, unless the child be actually with her at the time. This condition is not imposed upon the man. Therefore, a mother who had raised a boy deserted by his father and her husband, could not recover damages for his death; or if she could they would go into a fund to be kept for her absconding husband. When he returned, he could take the money legally and again desert her. Of course, this is not the law in all States, but it should not be the law even in one.*

MEN NEED WOMAN SUFFRAGE

I want equal suffrage for what it will do for men. We have halved society, as has been said, and the surgical operation has left the worse and weaker half to deal with political problems. Men have not been

*Cf. N. Y. Supplement, Vol. 27, p. 403; Bliss, N. Y. An. Code, Vol. 3, p. 3821, Sec. 7.

able to handle the increasing complexities of civilization. There may be no ultimate solution of these problems. I don't see any. But, then, I am a mere man. Perhaps when women get the political power that men have, they will be able to show us some remedy.

But though there may be no ultimate and universal remedy, there are certain crudely evident things that ought to be done, and which will be done when women get a real chance.

For instance, all monopoly of certain resources and products ought to cease. Ten per cent. of the people of the United States ought not to own 90 per cent. of the wealth. Half a million people, in a city like Chicago, ought not to be forced to live in unsanitary tenements because a few others have monopolized the land; 30,000 men should not be killed and twenty times as many injured in mine and factory every year; our children should not be taken at four, six, eight years old to drudge unceasingly to make our finery; our meats should not be tainted, our bread mouldy, our fruits spoiled. All these things are unnecessary.

Yet men have faced these conditions helplessly. They have made the laws under which such crimes have been perpetrated; under which our railroads and our express companies, our gas and electric light companies, have consistently robbed us in order to pay dividends on watered stock; under which a small ring of money kings have throttled the nation and dictated their own terms.

What women have done without the suffrage and where they have had the suffrage is a presage of what they will do when they get it universally. Woman has not only put her own house in order, she has put her town in order. Women are the only people who know what cleanliness means. Go into the house of a religious order of men—there are cobwebs on the

ceiling and dust on the floor, and you could write your name on the tables, because there are no women there to keep it clean. But a religious community of women will keep their house spotless, because there are no men around to dirty it up.

From coast to coast, women have put towns in order. They have gotten public parks and playgrounds, they have made war on billboards, ash heaps and garbage cans; they have gotten drinking fountains for man and beast; they have shortened hours for women and eliminated children from industry; they have put seats behind counters and started shop-early campaigns; the Red Cross Society and the war on tuberculosis are the result of women's efforts; she has established day nurseries and public feeding stations; she has obtained medical inspection in the schools.

And where woman has the vote she is concentrating her attention upon such laws as those for a minimum wage, anti-child labor, mothers, pensions, equal co-guardianship of children, vocational training in public schools and other State institutions.

Certainly man needs woman's help in governing this nation as in governing the home. As has been said, man has by long absorption in commerce been trained to think in terms of property; whereas woman by immemorial custom has been trained to think in terms of humanity—the home, husband, children. We cannot afford to have our laws made by any narrow, one-sided class as men have been and will continue to be. It is not only just and proper to give woman the vote—it is good policy. For we need the influx of their humanity in dealing with our problems.

NO SOLID ARGUMENT AGAINST SUFFRAGE

If you wish a third argument, it is that there is no argument against equal suffrage. When you carry the

war into the enemy's country and demand an argument against votes for women that does not equally apply to votes for men, you get only inconclusive vaporings.

It is sometimes said, for instance, that the exercise of the franchise will take a woman out of the home to the neglect of domestic duties. An advocate of votes for women was once addressing a Baltimore gathering and received this very objection when she offered to answer questions. Some mere man from the audience demanded with a delicious air of finality: "What's going to become of the babies when the women go out to vote?" "What becomes of them now when we go to market?" was the ready and sufficient reply.

In fact, one might just as reasonably urge that women should have no religion, because church-going may interfere with their home obligations. Church-going does interfere with the domestic duties of some women. They spend entirely too much time in church and in learning the gossip of the parish.

And why is it not a mother's place to prepare her boy for full-rounded citizenship? Why should a lad take his religion from his mother, but his politics from his father? Why should not her influence extend into the political sphere, too? Why should she not train him in political as in other righteousness? But she cannot do this effectively unless she have a personal interest through the suffrage. And so her domestic duties, instead of militating against the suffrage argue for it. For she cannot fulfill her duties toward her children in the largest, completest sense without taking some part in political affairs.

It is said, too, that for a wife to be able to vote will mean a constant source of quarreling between her and her husband. You cannot expect them to agree in politics, and, therefore, they will soon be breaking up the furniture. But we assume that we have reached

that degree of civilization where two people, even two who love one another and are united by one of God's sacraments, can differ without fighting about it. It is possible peaceably to agree or disagree. And if people can't do that on the question of politics, it will do little good to eliminate that particular question. They will find plenty of other things to quarrel over.

Others will tell you that women are governed too much by sentiment to use the suffrage intelligently. They are not so rational as men, they guess instead of reason, they jump at conclusions. But what's the harm of jumping at conclusions provided you arrive at the right one? Why go round Robin Hood's barn when you can go through? And men guess themselves. The difference between men and women in the matter is the difference between the North and the South. Northerners guess and Southerners reckon—but Southerners reckon better than Northerners guess. Men don't reason things out ordinarily. And fortunately so. For if our government were in the hands of educated men who reason to their conclusions, it would be the most egregious failure in the world. We who believe in democracy know that its success is based upon that fact—that the people, the great unwashed, uneducated people are, after all, better judges than a set of pedagogues.

What do the men who talk about sentiment and guess work know about the effects of a tariff? The great majority of them didn't have enough information on the subject to vote intelligently, according to their own standard. These self-constituted arbiters of what is practicable and impracticable, advisable and inadvisable, have always damned every progressive movement since the world began. They told us locomotives were useless because a horse beat the first one; they told us steam transatlantic navigation was impossible, because they had figured out, on rational

grounds, that a ship couldn't carry all the coal she would need; they told Columbus he was a fool to try for a new route—and so on indefinitely.

“Be sure you're right, then go ahead,” would be a good motto if you could ever be sure. But if you wait to be sure, you'll never get anywhere. You'll stay in the same place till doomsday. You will be like the scholastic donkey starving between two haystacks, because the reasons were equally good for eating either. A little recklessness, a little guessing, a little faith in Providence is necessary for progress. And because women have more faith than men they can use the suffrage better. For in some ways political faith is akin to divine faith—it is the substance of things hoped for, it is the evidence of things that appear not. (Hebr. 6: 1.)

Women have more hope, more optimism, more idealism, and therefore, they have greater ability to realize the substance of the things they hope for, greater power of creating the evidence of those things that appear not as yet to the grosser, more material vision of men.

And so, where women have not the suffrage, I would give it to them for these three reasons: (1) That they need it for their own spiritual and intellectual development as well as for a protection against man-made laws; (2) that men need that women should vote; (3) and the third reason is, that there is no reason against giving them the suffrage.

THE CHURCH AND THE POSITION OF WOMAN TO-DAY

BY

REV. JOSEPH H. McMAHON, Ph.D.

Rector of the Church of “Our Lady of Lourdes,”
New York City

I pointed out in a previous lecture that the fundamental philosophical reason of the woman movement

was briefly this: the social revolution, that has so completely changed her condition, has not been so swift in changing the framework of law that holds society together to-day. As a consequence, woman is in a false social position because that position is not recognized by the spirit of laws and constitutions enacted for other times, other conditions. Hence the need of legal changes, and enactments that shall be more in harmony with the *de facto* position of woman. I believe the need of some such proceeding is vaguely admitted by all. When it comes to the practical means of effecting these changes then there is evidently the widest divergence of opinion.

Let me make it clear, first of all, that the Catholic Church does not and cannot approve of any methods to better woman's position that are criminal or immoral. Time brings sweet revenges; and one of the sweetest is to have the representative of that Church that has for so long been vilified, calumniated and abused as upholding and practising the utterly immoral doctrine that "the end justifies the means" being now compelled to protest most energetically against those who formerly her most eager or convinced accusers, are now actually condoning or proclaiming this infamous teaching.

It is amazing to find women of culture, high social standing, unblemished personal morality, irreproachable private lives, unblushingly sympathizing with the cruel, criminal, barbaric demonstrations of militant suffragettes in England. Even members of the Catholic Woman's Suffrage League in that country have forgotten the teachings of their Church and the warnings of their ecclesiastical superiors in their blind but misguided zeal to secure the success of a means of betterment with which as such the Catholic Church has not and can have no quarrel.

Such indefensible methods gravely prejudice the

question at issue ; and as in all such matters, the resultant confusion creates in the mind of the thoughtless people who are unable, or do not take the trouble, to distinguish the issues, the idea that the Church and Catholics as such are opposed to woman suffrage. Nothing could be further from the real truth.

Individual Catholics indeed, in large numbers, and individual ecclesiastics, some of high standing, and of great authority, are opposed to granting the suffrage to women. But no authoritative or official pronouncement has been made against it nor is it easy to see how any such could legitimately or reasonably be made. And for every Oliver denouncing woman's suffrage, an ecclesiastical Roland can be cited.

Perhaps the strongest utterance as yet made in this country was that made last autumn by the Archbishop of San Francisco, when in a pastoral letter, fulfilling his episcopal office of teaching the faithful, he strongly urged the women of his flock to exercise their prerogative of voting. The testimony of Archbishop Redwood, of Wellington, New Zealand, given in a newspaper interview in this country, while it has not the same sacrosanct character, is, however, important and valuable to set against the harsher jeremiads of other ecclesiastics who apparently have not taken the trouble to study the question very profoundly, and are swayed more by their prophetic apprehensions of evil than by the calm logic of analogy, history and facts.

I take pleasure in quoting the interview in full: "Women," said the Archbishop to a reporter of the *St. Louis Times*, "have had the vote in New Zealand for many years, and it has been proven that they use it wisely and judiciously, and for the greatest common good. I am heartily in sympathy with the movement in this country, and believe that the tide of equal suffrage cannot be stemmed. Not very long ago we had a woman as mayor of Wellington, the capital of

New Zealand, and her administration, while not a phenomenal success, was a meritorious one in many respects. The greatest service of the women voters to New Zealand lies in the school, hospital and charitable departments, and in bringing about municipal beautification and improvement. The women of New Zealand have maintained the high standard of purity and womanhood, and, if anything, they are better wives and home-conservers."

Indeed, I am informed that in that wonderful antipodean land even the Catholic nuns vote, a fact, if it be a fact, that should rightfully give many of us an apoplectic seizure.

But seriously, why should women not have the right to vote? Let us examine that question apart from all personal prejudice, predilection, apprehension, aside even from the consideration that, in the opinion of many if not all those engaged in the feminist movement, it is the sole effective means of securing that betterment for which they are struggling.

The right to vote can be denied to women either on the ground that suffrage is an inherent right of the men of any commonwealth, or that women are essentially unfitted for its exercise, or, from the Catholic point of view, that to grant it would be to break with a sacred tradition, or that its exercise would tend to degrade them.

It is, of course, an absurdity to think that men have any inherent or essential right to the suffrage. That right is determined by the body politic, and is ultimately a matter of positive and mutable law. As far as it may be connected with the fundamental law of any society the suffrage should belong to the directing elements of such society. Under present conditions women must surely be counted among these elements. Once you proclaim the principle of universal suffrage and be it understood such principle is proclaimed in

the idea of manhood suffrage, you really ignore the right of all the directing elements and substitute the senseless tyranny of a majority unless you provide for some sort of proportional representation.

The Supreme Court of New Jersey quite recently denied that there was any such thing as an inherent right to the suffrage, or any intrinsic necessity that it belonged to one class of citizens rather than to another.

Restrict the suffrage if you will; enact any qualification you may desire, but do not be guilty of the absurdity and injustice of establishing sex as a barrier, when under actual conditions woman is so important a factor in every relation of modern life. Woman without the suffrage, and therefore without responsibility, has always exerted political influence. Her ignorance in affairs of State was so much the more dangerous since, incurring no responsibility, running no risk, she could allow herself to be guided by whim or passion. Place responsibility on her by giving the right to vote, and at least you are in no worse position, but in all probability in a better one.

Nor can it be truthfully said that woman is unfitted for the exercise of the suffrage. Who will claim, for instance, that a woman of education and affairs cannot better discharge that function than her ignorant furnace man, or the drunken corner loafer, or the low-browed gunman, or the political heeler.

What sound argument can be advanced against the proposal to give woman the right of suffrage? Surely the appeal to tradition, especially on the part of Catholics, is pointless and contradictory. For, first of all, we must remember that the political system of suffrage is altogether of recent date, commencing practically with the establishment of these United States.

The protest in the name of traditional custom is about as sensible as a protest against automobiles or

electricity. As a witty French woman put it: "You might as well say that since the Romans did not make use of dynamos we have no right to use incandescent lamps. Parliamentary rule and universal suffrage are also novelties of the century, and it would be difficult to prove by legal tests or historic documents that the exercise of our right to vote was long ago an exclusively masculine appanage."

On the contrary, and it is well for Catholics, particularly, to take note of this, as far as there is a tradition, it is in favor of woman suffrage.

In former times all governmental offices were filled by the sovereign or by right of inheritance or rank, and voting was a rarity. But wherever the right to vote did exist, in the great mediæval corporations, for example, in cantonal, communal or municipal affairs, and especially in female as well as male religious communities, women as such were not excluded from voting.

There is on record, for instance, the details of an election in Montpellier in 1334 and 20 per cent. of the voters were women. In almost every country women had the right to vote in communal affairs. In the republics of the Middle Ages the officials of the Communes were designated by lot irrespective of sex, a usage that obtained in Tuscany until 1849 and in Lombardy until 1816.

In the Franche-Comte women who were landed proprietors assisted in the legislative councils, and the convocation writ of the famous States-General of 1780 is a proof of the right of women to vote.

According to feudal law, a woman possessed of a fief acquired all seignorial rights. She could administer and receive oaths, nominate officials, assist at deliberative and legislative assemblies. In many countries a married woman could administer her own property independently of her husband.

Laboulaye cites marriage contracts of that tenor

from the tenth and eleventh centuries that not only endow women with property and administrative rights, but also with proprietary rights. Such rights included that of voting. The early municipal customs of France, Spain and Flanders gave women an independence greater than they have ever possessed until now. Laboulaye, who surely cannot be accused of partiality to woman suffrage, admits that "women during all the Middle Ages possessed entire civic capacity, and preserved it even when married, no matter what their rank. That doctrine confirmed by the Code of St. Louis is general. A woman possessed of a fief exercised the right to hold courts both of first instance and of appeal, to coin money, to levy troops, to serve in person her suzerain, if she so willed."

Instances in proof will occur to the memory. The Countess of Flanders sat with her peers in the trial of the Count of Clermont by St. Louis, King of France. The Countess Matilda nobly served her suzerain, the great St. Gregory, patron of this association. The pages of mediæval French and English history are full of similar instances. King Louis le Jeune, in a letter to the Vicomtesse of Marbonne, recognized the right of women to administer justice. Out of forty-eight great fiefs of France only one excluded women from the Council of State; that was the Ile de France, a dependence of the king and, consequently, under the Salic law. But be it remembered that France itself was alone in imposing the Salic law, and France, even while refusing to women succession to the throne, placed in their hands the regency with powers as great as royalty itself could possess.

Those who appeal to tradition, then, to justify the refusal to women of the suffrage, are thereby convicted of ignorance. For Catholics such an appeal is an indication of abyssmal ignorance. The times of which we have been speaking were Catholic. In Cath-

olic countries, the Code of St. Louis, which sanctioned these rights to women, continued in force until it was ruthlessly superseded by the Code of the Revolution. Catholics, therefore, who invoke tradition as opposed to the principle of woman suffrage are embracing the unholy tradition of the French Revolution, and are innocently adopting the motto of Milton's Satan, "Evil be thou my Good." Moreover, Catholics, above all, should not forget that to-day, even as in the Middle Ages, in religious communities, women elect their superiors. The history of abbesses in their Church should stop their protest against woman's right to vote. Furthermore, it may be a surprise, but it is, nevertheless, a fact that even to-day in the great diocese of Turin, Italy, and in many of the Catholic cantons of Switzerland, Catholic women as well as their men folk vote for the parish priest, and the Bishop is obliged to confirm the candidate so elected by the votes of the women as well as those of men, unless he can find some canonical ground for his refusal, and then the election must be held again by identically the same electors.

If the Catholic Church allows women to vote for an office of such tremendous responsibility as that involving the care of souls, who will presume to say that she is of necessity opposed to women voting for merely political officials.

But, it will be urged, woman suffrage will introduce another cause of discord in the home. Husband and wife may disagree in politics. The woman who mixes in political affairs will neglect her home duties. To which it may safely be said, first, that there are others to be considered than married women. Single women are a legion, and then there are widows to be taken into account. Surely their claims have as much right to be considered as married women. But leaving this out of sight, suppose you do prevent a woman from

voting, you cannot prevent her from thinking. So, fundamentally, if disagreement may be cause of discord, it is not removed by the denial of the vote. Husbands and wives are now divided on more important questions than political ones, but in the majority of cases they manage to get along.

We all know of families divided by deeper and more fundamental differences in religious matters, yet they manage to live in harmony. Is it not absurd then to think that political divergence must inevitably produce shipwreck?

To say that the exercise of the right to vote will mean that a woman must neglect her home duties is to utter a smug commonplace that shows how little given to reflection we are.

It is true, and observing foreigners have often told us so, that our American women do not seem to take any intelligent interest in political affairs. That is no longer true of a considerable body of our women. But it has not been noted that in European countries, where educated women have not only a keen interest in their husbands' business affairs, but also in the great political concerns of their country, their domestic duties suffer from their intellectual activity.

It is a truism in those countries that where women are interested intelligently in the serious business of life, their own peculiar duties are better performed and managed. It is not the idle, flirting, pleasure-loving, brainless, seven-toilettes a day dolls of our ballrooms or card parties that make the best housekeepers, wives, or mothers. And, practically speaking, how much time does the average male voter bestow upon the discharge of his political duty in this country?

Again, I say, restrict the suffrage by some intelligible standard of qualification, but as long as the enlightened farmers of Clinton County, New York, the floating voters of New York City, the Whited Sepulchers

of Adams County, Ohio, are so much in evidence, do not be guilty of the imbecility of denying the vote to women because it would interfere with their home duties.

Do not seek refuge either in the hypocritical assertion that the casting of a ballot once a year in a ballot-box in a polling place, protected by every known device, will degrade women or be an indecent act. Before you descend to utter that, stop the crowding in our New York subway, elevated and surface cars, where every vestige of delicacy disappears in your treatment of women, where the standard of decency is daily degraded, where all the fine restraints Christian civilization has thrown around woman for the protection of her modesty are disregarded and she consequently vulgarized.

Stop your promiscuous pleasure gatherings. Men, stop taking your wives to the theatre where they behold representations that make them glad that no one but their husbands are with them; stop your young girls from going to performances and talking about them, even while admitting they could not endure the thought of witnessing them in the company of any of their men folks, relatives or friends.

Purify your social life, but do not be guilty of the stupidity of saying that the exercise of the right to vote would degrade any virtuous woman in the world. As long as you send your daughters out into the busy market place with all its dangers, and expect them to avoid the pitfalls that are, alas, too common, please do not commit intellectual suicide by declaring that they cannot vote because their modesty or reserve might suffer.

And to bring the matter a little closer, as long as at church bazaars, fairs, collections, card parties, receptions *et hoc genus omne*, you can engage the services of Catholic women, young and old, to meet friend and stranger alike, without any thought of danger, please

do not conjure up imaginary dangers as lurking in a polling booth, protected by the laws of the land and the intelligent manhood that is at last awakening to its duty in the politics of their country.

Delivered before the Catholic Library Association at Delmonico's, January 15, 1913, and reported in the *Catholic News*, New York City, February 1, 1913.

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH IT? *

BY

REV. J. ELLIOT ROSS, Ph.D., C.S.P.

Chicago, Ill.

Author of "Consumers and Wage-Earners"

You women of Illinois have the vote—what are you going to do with it?

To the women who have not thought of voting, or who have halfway decided not to vote, I wish to say:

Have you ever walked down State Street in the eight or nine hundred block? If you have, you must have observed the horrible looking specimens of humanity spilt along the street—men with viciousness and debauchery written all over their faces.

Each one of those men has a vote and he is going to use it. He is not going to stay away from the polls through indifference or laziness or any sense of home duties. He and thousands of others of his kind will vote just as some dishonest, grafting politician dictates, to help on the vice and corruption here in Chicago.

Now, you have the power to offset one such corrupt, dishonest, vicious vote. Aren't you going to use it? Aren't you, the Catholic women of Chicago, going to

*An appeal made shortly before the Spring Election of 1914, urging the Catholic women of Illinois to exercise their newly acquired civic rights.

break the forces of the power of evil? Forty-five per cent. of the people of Chicago are Catholics—one-fourth of the voters of Chicago are Catholic women. Have we not a right to expect that you should rise up as a unit to smite the army of darkness that has too long held us in thrall?

Each one of you, it seems to me, has an obligation to vote. It is an obligation that you cannot shirk without offending God. Any little whim, such as a distaste at appearing at the polls, will not be sufficient excuse. For there is a duty placed upon you by the supreme law of charity to kill that one vote for evil that it is in your power to kill.

You must, then, vote. And you must vote honestly. Never let there be ground for saying of you, as there has been for saying of Catholic men, that they have used the franchise dishonestly. The Catholic women of Chicago must be above directly or indirectly corrupting public officials—if they should become officials themselves, they must be irreproachable. I would not so much as suggest that you might consider the taking of outright bribes, the payment of so much cash for such a service. But you must keep your eyes open and your hearts pure to detect every indirect form, such as promise of re-election, social prestige and every personal advantage.

Catholic women must not use their power as citizens or as officials merely for their private profit. Do not vote for an alderman simply because he will have a street opened for your benefit when dozens of other streets ought to come first. Our government should not degenerate into a wild scramble for personal privileges regardless of moral law and God's justice. If there be good reason to call our governments by the expressive name of troughs, we have no right to become pigs therein in our eagerness to get our share of the graft. To steal from the people is as great a

sin or greater than to steal from an individual, no matter how the operation is conducted, no matter what name it bears in public opinion.

And the Catholic women of Chicago must not only do no political wrong with their votes, they must do much political good. It ought to be a foregone conclusion that Catholic names should be foremost in every movement for social betterment. Instead of strengthening the hopeless inertia that all seekers after improvement have to struggle so hard to overcome, they should be prominent in arousing the social conscience to action. You who pray so many times a day, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven," might reasonably, one might think, be counted upon to do something to make God's will more effective here and now.

You cannot give as an excuse for standing here all the day idle that no man has hired you. You belong to the chosen people, and Christ has called you from our baptism to be a light unto the nations that know him not. It is useless for you to say, "I do no harm, I hurt no one," God did not put you here merely to do no harm. The commandments of the old law were all negative. Thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not steal, and so on. But the commandments of Christ are positive. The rich young man, who from his youth up had kept these negative commandments of the old law, had not done enough. He was told to sell all he had. Christ does not say, "Do no harm," but "Love God with your whole heart, and your neighbor as yourself; render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Therefore, in our political life, a mere negative goodness will not do. If we are good trees, we must produce good fruit. It is not sufficient that we should simply not produce bad fruit, if indeed, such a thing

is possible. For Christ said, He that is not with Me is against Me, he that gathereth not, scattereth, and he who is not working to produce good is at least permitting evil. This is especially true under our form of government. The forces of evil are ever active, and if a good woman merely refrains from voting because it is raining or it is too much trouble or for some other equally weak reason, she is really placing this vote in the hands of corrupt politicians. It was in her power to offset the vote of the vicious men who are always under the thumb of ward-heelers, and she did not do it. She is not merely not doing good—she is doing evil. For, to all intents and purposes, she is casting a vote for the machine, she is strengthening the grip of corruption upon our government.

We have a right to expect that the Catholic women of Chicago will do all in their power, will exert themselves to the utmost, to bring about the social good. We are members one of another. We were born into society and cannot escape from it if we would. It is not too much to say that we owe all our comforts, even our lives, to society, and we are bound to make some return. Whether you be high officials or low, women of large influence or simply with a vote to cast, you are obliged in the sight of God to use your power, such as it is, for good and against evil. You must in conscience vote for the good man as against the bad, the honest man as opposed to the grafter.

I don't believe we shall be disappointed in our expectations. I don't believe that the chivalrous confidence that we have had in women has been misplaced. And I pray that the Catholic women will be among those to respond most faithfully to this confidence. I pray—I know that the great mass of Catholic voters added to the electorate by the last legislature, the Catholic women of Chicago and Illinois, will respond loyally to the responsibility placed upon them; that

they will vote honestly and intelligently, knowing the issues and the candidates; that they will continue to be, as they have always been, dominated by the great Christian principles of morality; and that instead of being corrupted by politics, as some have predicted, that they will purify and ennoble the home. Whatever we may have thought before of votes for women, they have achieved or had greatness thrust upon them, and they must not refuse its accompanying duties. Let womanhood take to herself those words of the King and Prophet David: "In thy comeliness and thy beauty go forward, proceed prosperously, and reign." Make them truly prophetic of the career of the women of Illinois. In your comeliness, and in your beauty, go forward, proceed prosperously, and reign,—more righteously and honestly than the men have.

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By REV. J. ELLIOT ROSS, Ph.D.

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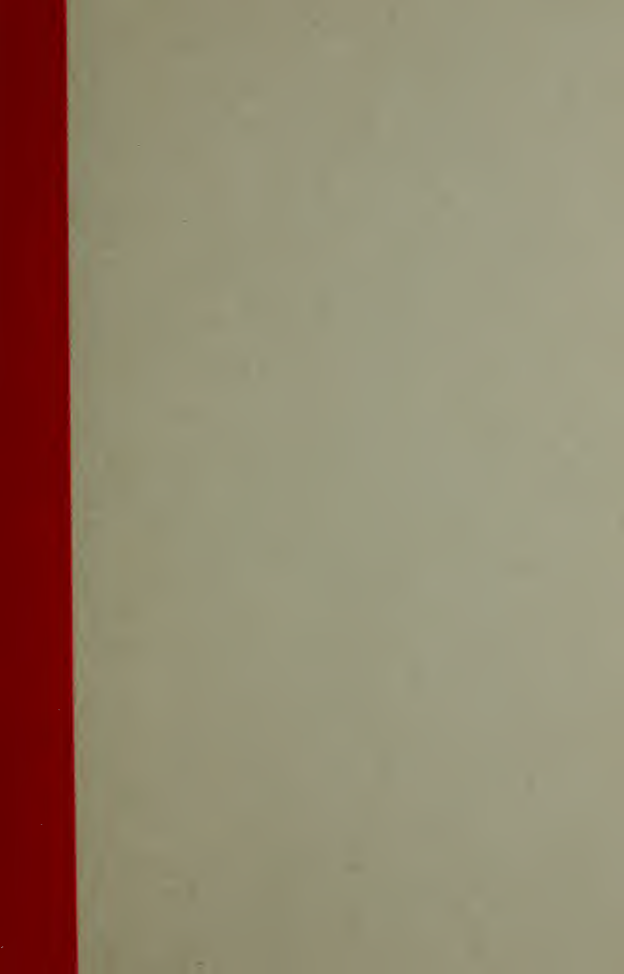
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